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AUTHOR Presson, Johnny E.; Baker, Wilbur L.
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ABSTRACT

"Learning City" is the theme of a summer education project that provides a unique teaching atmosphere for migrant children. For 2 summers, 130 students have participated in this program that sustains and enforces reading and math skills, as well as helps develop self-concept. Industries in Learning City are the various branches of study: reading and creative writing, mathematics, science, music, art, and physical education. Teaching of reading correlates with each area. To encourage study and to develop a serious attitude toward learning, each industry pays the worker (student) skill notes on a piece-work basis. These notes in turn may be deposited in the Migrant Savings and No Loan Bank or may be spent immediately on candy, books, toys, etc. at the Mall Gift Shop. Learning City has its own radio station, newspaper, cinema, and book exchange. Students reading 10 books may choose 3 books to keep as their own. The mayoress is the coordinator of City activities; the sheriff's job changes from day to day as it is awarded to different eligible citizens. Test scores of 42 program participants were compared with those of 42 students of similar backgrounds who did not have the summer experience. Learning City citizens had an average gain of 5.2 months compared to 3.1 months in reading and a math gain of 7.0 months compared to 3.7 months for the non-participants. Thirteen students (31%) achieved gains of 1 year or more in reading, math, or both compared to only 4 (11%) of the non-participants. (DS)

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AASA 112th ANNUAL CONVENTION

February 15-18, 1980

Anaheim, California

Speaker: Dr. Johnny E. Presson

Session: Migrant Education Programs

Date: Friday, February 15

Time: 4:00 p.m.

RC 012002

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P R E S E N T A T I O N

AASA CONVENTION

TOPIC: Migrant Education

PRESENTER: Dr. Johnny E. Presson
Superintendent
Scotland County Schools
Laurinburg, North Carolina 28352

DATE: February 15, 1980

TIME: 4:00 p.m.

EMPHASIS: "Learning City"
Summer Migrant Program

INTRODUCTION: My first experience with Migrant Education occured in the spring of 1977. At that time I was Assistant Superintendent in the Guilford County School System in Greensboro, North Carolina. One Monday morning I received a frantic phone call from an elementary school principal. This particular morning eleven (11) children from Mexico, who spoke only Spanish, had come to school to enroll. My phone call to the N. C. State Department of Public Instruction soon had me talking with the Migrant Education Division. I explained our problem and after an exchange of information, an appointment with the consultant was scheduled in our administrative office on Thursday of the same week. During our conference on Thursday, not only was the preliminary project completed, but the project became and still is a joint project of two school systems. On the following Monday, one week after my call from the principal, we had the children in the classroom with a teacher. We were fortunate in that a fourth grade teacher in this particular school was bi-lingual and agreed to become the migrant teacher.

"LEARNING CITY"
Migrant Summer Program
Scotland County Schools

BACKGROUND: In July of 1978, I took the position of Superintendent with the Scotland County Schools. North Carolina has a summer conference for LEA's sponsored by the State Department of Public Instruction. In the week before I took the position of Superintendent, I had the opportunity to hear the Federal Programs Director with the Scotland County Schools give a presentation on the school system's summer migrant program called "Learning City". I was impressed with the concept and within a week was observing the program in operation.

"LEARNING CITY"

In the summer of 1978, the unique idea of Learning City was born and became a real life experience for students. This Summer Migrant Education Program, designed by the director, has provided learning experiences in a mall setting for approximately 130 students during the past 2 summers.

The industries in Learning City are the various branches of study. These include reading and creative writing, mathematics, science, music, art and physical education. The teaching of reading is correlated with each of the learning areas. To encourage study and to develop a serious attitude toward learning, each industry pays its workers (students) skill notes on a piece work basis.

These skill notes may be deposited in the bank (Migrant Savings and No Loans Bank) where they are safely accumulated for future use. Or, they may be spent immediately - - buying candy, toys, books and so forth at the Mall Gift Shop. Most of the items in the Gift Shop were donated by businesses in Laurinburg.

In addition to the bank and gift shop, Learning City also has a Radio Station, Newspaper and Cinema. The radio station WMAG (We Migrants Are Great) broadcasts the daily news and special programs. The "LEARNING CITY NEWS", which is written and printed by Learning City reporters, provided complete coverage of city news items and reports on Learning City Enterprises. The Learning Mall Cinema features "live" entertainment as well as slide shows. The Restaurant in Learning City provided the participants with breakfast and lunch each day.

A special part of Learning City is "TINY TOWN". Tiny Town is a primary reading/social studies area which served 58 students in grades K-3. Tiny Town included several learning centers in reading, science, math, social studies, listening, health and physical education. Many resource persons share a variety of experiences with the children in Tiny Town. Tiny Town also had its own branch bank.

Learning City has a Mayoress and a Sheriff's Office located in City Hall. The Mayoress is the coordinator and in charge of all Learning City activities. The person acting as Sheriff changes from day to day as the job is awarded to different eligible citizens. Thus far, there has been only one case of embezzling in Learning City.

Another feature of Learning City is the Book Exchange where the students in the city gathered and exchanged books and other remedial materials. Students received and widely used the daily newspaper in each class setting. The newspaper became the child's own property and was taken home for individual and family use at the close of each day. Customers (students) who read at least 10 books during the duration of the program were given three (3) books of their choice to add to their home library.

Instructional emphasis during the summer program was placed on vocabulary, comprehension and communication skill development. Survival skills and the development of self concept were also a part of the program design. As mentioned earlier, students were given skill notes each time for accomplishments or

achievement. Teaching the concept that one must work for what one gets was highly emphasized throughout the project.

At the beginning of the program, student skill needs were identified. The necessary materials were selected and a price tag was assigned to each skill or activity to be mastered. For each skill or activity completed or mastered by a student, skill notes of the appropriate amount were given. The program design included a gift and award shop where student's skill notes were redeemed for useful items found in the shop. Reading instruction in the program was correlated with other subject areas. Curriculum materials, including basic subject area materials, were supplemented by newspaper and community resources, both human and material. Time was given each day for students to have an opportunity to share some of their learning experiences with others.

Comparison of test scores on the California Achievement Test of students who attended the Summer Migrant Program in 1978 with 42 students of similar background who did not have the summer experience, proved most interesting. Students in the comparative study were all eligible migrant students in grades 4-8 from 9 schools in Scotland County.

From the spring of 1978 to the spring of 1979 the 42 students in the summer program had an average gain in reading of 5.2 months compared to an average of 3.1 for students not in the program. In math the 42 students in the summer program had an average gain of 7.0 months compared to 3.7 months for the other students. Eleven (11) students who did not have the summer experience made no gains or regressed in reading and math compared to only 5 involved in the summer program. Thirteen (13) or 31% of the 42 students in the summer program achieved gains of one year or more in reading, math or both compared with only four (4) or 11% of those who did not have the same experience.

As one entered the lobby of the Learning Mall, a sign stated, "Real Life Experiences Being Lived." As one walked down "Self Concept Lane" in Learning City, one could see survival skills being taught and practiced.

In conclusion, I offer to you that the "Learning City" theme of the Scotland County Schools Summer Migrant Education Project provides a unique and innovative teaching atmosphere for migrant children. Not only does the program sustain and enforce the reading and math skills taught during the school year, but also helps the student develop his/her self concept.

The project's theme song and motto was truly applicable to its operation.

We are Great
We are Great
We are Great and So is our City.

We are Great
We are Great
We are Great and so is our State.

HANDOUTS

(1) "Creating A Balance of Life For Youth Through Migrant Education", Pamphlet, Scotland County Schools

(2) "Migrant Matters", Volume IX, Number 1
Migrant Education Section / North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, Summer, 1979.

Assistance in the preparation of this presentation was received from Wilbur L. Baker.